

Message Text

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INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

USFJ FUCHU JAPAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TOKYO 9019

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT JA

SUBJECT: LDP SUFFERS SHARP SETBACK IN UPPER HOUSE ELECTION

REF: TOKYO 8942

SUMMARY: IN SIGNIFICANT UPSET WHICH DEFIED ALL PREDICTIONS, VOTERS IN TENTH TRIENNIAL HOUSE OF COUNCILLORS ELECTION JULY 7 REDUCED LDP STRENGTH IN UPPER HOUSE TO BARE MAJORITY AND DELIVERED HEAVY BLOW TO PRIMIN TANAKA'S PRESTIGE AND STRENGTH AS HEAD OF GOVERNMENT AND LEADER OF RULING PARTY. FULL DIMENSIONS OF ELECTIONS'S IMPACT ON GOJ/LDP LEADERSHIP AND ON POWER STRUCTURE WITHIN LDP REMAIN TO BE SEEN, BUT IT IS CLEAR THAT LDP WILL HAVE TO ACCOMMODATE TO STRONGER OPPOSITION FORCES IN DIET AND THAT PRIMIN TANAKA WILL FACE MORE CHALLENGE TO HIS LEADERSHIP FROM WITHIN LDP. WE THINK EFFECT OF ELECTION RESULTS ON US-JAPAN RELATIONS WILL BE NEGLIGIBLE, ALTHOUGH WEAKENED LDP DIET POSITION AND DISUNITY WITHIN RULING PARTY COULD CONCEIVABLY MAKE FOR MORE CAUTIOUS, LESS POSITIVE GOJ STANCE ON CONTROVERSIAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN POLICY MATTERS. END SUMMARY.

1. FINAL DISTRIBUTION OF UPPER HOUSE SEATS WILL NOT BE KNOWN

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UNTIL NEXT WEEK BECAUSE ELECTION HAD TO BE POSTPONED IN PARTS OF

MIE PREFECTURE, WHERE TYPHOON GILDA PREVENTED NORMAL BALLOTING. ELECTION RESULTS THUS FAR THOUGH, INDICATE THAT LDP WILL RETAIN ITS MAJORITY IN UPPER HOUSE BY MARGIN OF TWO OR THREE SEATS. EVEN THIS RESULT, HOWEVER, WILL BE ACHIEVED ONLY WHEN THREE CONSERVATIVE WINNERS WHO RAN AS INDEPENDENTS JOIN THE PARTY. WITH FOUR NATIONAL CONSTITUENCY SEATS STILL UNDECIDED, TOTAL SEATS WON BY PARTIES IN THIS ELECTION (TOTAL OF 130 CONTESTED) ARE: LDP - 60, JSP - 28, KOMEITO - 14, DSP - 5, JCP - 11 AND INDEPENDENTS - 8. (WINNERS OF FOUR REMAINING SEATS WILL COME FROM AMONG THREE LDP AND TWO JCP CANDIDATES IN NATIONAL CONSTITUENCY.) BREAKDOWN OF 76 SEATS IN LOCAL CONSTITUENCIES FOLLOWS: LDP - 43, JSP - 18, KOMEITO - 5, DSP - 1, JCP - 5 AND INDEPENDENTS - 4. TOTALS FOR 50 NATIONAL CONSTITUENCY SEATS DECIDED THUS FAR ARE: LDP - 17, JSP - 10, KOMEITO - 9, DSP - 4, JCP - 6 AND INDEPENDENTS - 4. CURRENT PROJECTIONS ARE THAT LDP AND JCP WILL EACH RECEIVE TWO OF LAST FOUR PLACES STILL UNDECIDED IN NATIONAL RACE. ASSUMING THESE PROJECTIONS TO BE ACCURATE, NEW OVERALL PARTY LINE UP IN UPPER HOUSE WOULD BE: LDP - 126 (134 BEFORE ELECTION), JSP - 62 (59), KOMEITO - 24 (23), DSP - 10 (11), JCP - 20 (11), AND INDEPENDENTS - 8 (6).

2. JULY 9 NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS UNIFORMLY CHARACTERIZED ELECTION RESULTS AS SETBACK FOR LDP AND ATTRIBUTED THEM TO STRONG POPULAR DISSATISFACTION WITH TANAKA ADMINISTRATION RATHER THAN UPSURGE OF SUPPORT FOR OPPOSITION PARTIES. EDITORIALS SAID VOTERS USED ELECTION AS VEHICLE TO EXPRESS DISCONTENT OVER GOVERNMENT FAILURE TO COPE ADEQUATELY WITH PRICE RISES, POLLUTION AND OTHER ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS. SOME ALSO FELT PUBLIC WAS REACTING AGAINST HIGH-HANDED QTE MONEY COUNTS UNQTE LDP ELECTION TACTICS. PREDICTABLY PRESS URGED QTE SELF-REFLECTION UNQTE ON PART OF LDP LEADERS AND ADOPTION OF NEW POLICIES MORE RESPONSIVE TO PUBLIC WILL. MOREOVER, AT LEAST ONE PAPER (ASAHI), ANTICIPATING PROBLEMS OF UPPER HOUSE LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT FOR LDP, URGED CONSERVATIVES TO MOVE FROM POLICY OF CONFRONTATION TO ONE OF DIALOGUE WITH OPPOSITION.

3. REACTION OF LDP LEADERSHIP TO ELECTION RESULTS WAS GENERALLY TO ACCEPT THEM AS POPULAR VERDICT EXPRESSING DISSATISFACTION WITH LDP AND ITS FAILURE TO DEAL WITH PROBLEMS OF PRICES AND INFLATION. PRIMIN TANAKA, HOWEVER, IN JULY 9 PRESS CONFERENCE (SEPTTEL) CONFIDENTIAL

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STRONGLY REBUTTED SUGGESTION THAT LDP SETBACK ATTRIBUTABLE TO LDP'S EXERCISE OF QTE MONEY POWER UNQTE AND CORPORATE PARTICIPATION OF BIG BUSINESS IN CAMPAIGN. ADMITTING THAT HIGH COSTS OF ELECTIONEERING WAS PROBLEM, HE AGAIN BROUGHT FORTH AS HIS SOLUTION ELECTORAL REFORM FEATURING SMALL SINGLE-MEMBER ELECTORAL DISTRICTS. OTHER PARTY SPOKESMEN APPEARED FRANKLY SHOCKED BY RESULTS, AND IN CASE OF FINANCE MINISTER FUKUDA AND DEPUTY PRIMIN MIKI, COMMENTS WERE OPENLY CRITICAL OF TANAKA'S

HANDLING OF CAMPAIGN WHICH THEY SUGGESTED MISTAKENLY OVER-EMPHASIZED ELECTION SPENDING. FUKUDA REPORTEDLY STATED THAT AMONG MANY FACTORS BEHIND SETBACK WAS VOTER DISSATISFACTION WITH (TANAKA'S) QTE SHOWY POLITICAL POSTURE UNQTE AND WAY GOVERNMENT POLICIES ARE BEING CARRIED OUT.

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4. AS NOTED BY PRESS, ONE IMMEDIATE EFFECT OF ELECTION SETBACK WILL BE MORE DIFFICULT TIMES FOR GOJ/LDP IN MANAGING DIET AFFAIRS. NARROWED MARGIN BETWEEN RULING PARTY AND COMBINED OPPOSITION IN UPPER HOUSE WILL MAKE IT VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR LDP TO FORCE THROUGH LEGISLATION BY UNILATERAL ACTION WHEN FACED BY ADAMANT RESISTANCE BY OPPOSITION. OPPOSITION LEADERS HAVE ALREADY BEGUN TO DEMAND THAT THEIR PARTIES BE GIVEN APPROPRIATE SHARE OF COMMITTEE CHAIRMANSHIPS AND THAT LDP EXPLICITLY FORESSWEAR USE OF ITS MAJORITY POSITION TO DECIDE ISSUES WITHOUT CONSULTING OTHER PARTIES. ALTHOUGH THESE ARE PERENNIAL OPPOSITION DEMANDS, LDP THIS TIME WILL FACE POWERFUL PRESSURE TO ACCOMMODATE THEM WHEN DIET IS CONVENED LATER THIS MONTH TO ORGANIZE POST-ELECTION HOUSE OF COUNCILLORS.

5. ANOTHER FORESEEABLE CONSEQUENCE OF ELECTION IS SHARP DECLINE IN PRIMIN TANAKA'S CONTROL OVER HIS PARTY. SLIPPAGE IN LDP STRENGTH DESPITE HUGE OUTLAYS OF FUNDS HAS EXPOSED TANAKA

TO STRONG CRITICISM FROM WITHIN THE LDP. TANAKA'S HARD-DRIVING QTE BULLDOZER UNQTE TACTICS IN CONDUCTING THIS CAMPAIGN HAD COME UNDER CRITICISM EVEN DURING THE CAMPAIGN. MUCH OF TANAKA'S EFFORT IN THIS CAMPAIGN WAS DIRECTED AT INCREASING HIS INFLUENCE AND CONSOLIDATING HIS POWER WITHIN HIS PARTY. THUS
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FAILURE OF OFFICIAL LDP CANDIDATES TO WIN IN HOKKAIDO, WHERE TWO LDP INCUMBENTS WERE IGNOMINIOUSLY BLANKED, AND IN TOKUSHIMA, WHERE TANAKA'S HAND-PICKED CANDIDATE LOST TO ANOTHER CONSERVATIVE, WAS SEVERE BLOW TO TANAKA'S PRESTIGE WITHIN PARTY. POST, ELECTION ATMOSPHERE WITHIN THE PARTY WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY ENCOURAGE ANTI-TANAKA FORCES AND COULD LEAD TO FORMATION OF FACTIONAL COALITION SEEKING TO FRUSTRATE PRIMIN TANAKA'S DRIVE FOR REELECTION AS PARTY HEAD AND PRIME MINISTER AT NEXT SUMMER'S LDP CONVENTION.

6. ALTHOUGH SOME MEDIA COMMENTARY HAS DEPLORED FAILURE OF ANY PARTY TO RAISE FOREIGN POLICY AS ISSUE IN JUST CONCLUDED CAMPAIGN, IT IS QUITE CLEAR THAT MAJOR CONCERN OF VOTERS IN ELECTION WAS FOCUSSED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY ON DOMESTIC CONCERNS. WE DO NOT SEE ANY DIRECT EFFECT ON US-JAPANESE RELATIONS DERIVING FROM ELECTION CAMPAIGN OR ITS RESULTS. WEAKENED POSITION OF GOJ/ LDP VIS-A-VIS OPPOSITION IN DIET COULD RESULT IN LESS VIGOROUS HANDLING OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES INCLUDING MATTERS OF U.S. CONCERN, SUCH AS PROBLEMS CONNECTED WITH BASES AND SECURITY. PROSPECT OF INCREASED INTRA-PARTY FACTIONAL INFIGHTING IN ELECTION AFTER-MATH MAY ALSO HAVE SOME BEARING ON CONSENSUS WITHIN LDP ON CERTAIN FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES, SUCH AS RATIFICATION OF NPT, RELATIONS WITH TAIPEI AND PEKING, AND RELATIONS WITH ROK.

7. LDP QTE DEFEAT UNQTE IN THIS ELECTION, WHILE OBVIOUSLY SHORT OF CATASTROPHIC, HAS RAISED OLD SPECTOR OF END OF LDP MONOPLY OF POWER FOR CONSERVATIVES AND OPPOSITION ALIKE, AS DROP OF LDP VOTE IN LOCAL CONSTITUENCY TO BELOW 40 PERCENT, DESPITE RECORD TURNOUT OF VOTERS, CONFIRMS LONG-TERM TREND OF DECLINING SUPPORT FOR LDP. ON OTHER HAND, ELECTION RESULTS SHOWED NO SPECTATULAR SHIFT IN FAVOR OF ALTERNATE PARTY. THEY SEEM RATHER TO SUGGEST DEMAND FOR CHANGE WITHIN MODERATE CONSERVATIVE LEADERSHIP RATHER THAN FOR ITS REPLACEMENT.

8. AFTER FURTHER ANALYSIS OF ELECTION RESULTS, WE PLAN TO EXAMINE IN GREATER DEPTH THE SHAPE AND DIRECTION OF BASIC CHANGES WE FEEL ARE TAKING PLACE IN JAPANESE POLITICS TODAY.
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